

Washington, DC – Today, Congresswoman Gwen Moore is scheduled to speak on the floor of the US House regarding legislation -- H.R. 6968 The Helping Those Who Serve Act-- she has recently introduced which seeks to assist service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who may be suffering from or at risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

“The bill I have introduced will attempt to attack a commonly identified barrier to seeking care for PTSD among members of our military: stigma,” said Congresswoman Moore. “Too many service members are reluctant to seek counseling and other services for fear of negative career repercussions. Our soldiers are worried that seeking treatment for PTSD won’t be confidential and will affect future job assignments and military-career advancement.”

The American Psychiatric Association reported this year that while 6 in 10 soldiers said their deployment in a war zone caused them to suffer from negative experiences associated with stress, only 10% had sought treatment because they fear doing so would impact negatively on their career.

The bill would require the DOD to conduct a demonstration project to test options to ensure that service members have access to safe and confidential counseling services so they can get the care they need without worrying whether it will have an adverse effect on their military career.

The bill would build upon a recommendation included in the recent RAND Corporation's Invisible Wounds of War report which urged the Defense Department to consider changing its policies, “so that there are no perceived or real adverse career consequences for individuals who seek treatment, except when functional impairment (e.g., poor job performance) compromises fitness for duty” including revising policies to allow soldiers to access safe and confidential treatment.

According to the RAND Corporation study, as many as 300,000 of the 1.64 million men and women who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan currently suffer from PTSD, depression, or other conditions. “We need to remove the institutional barriers that discourage soldiers from seeking care,” said Terri Tanielan one of the RAND reports authors.

“The goal is simple: to promote early intervention and access to health care for those who, because of fears about how such visits are perceived, would otherwise not seek care,” said Rep. Moore. “Increasing access to confidential treatment has the potential to increase the use of mental health services and to increase force readiness by encouraging individuals to seek needed health care before problems deteriorate to a critical level. Ensuring our soldiers have access to high quality mental health care and the tools necessary to live healthy lives should be of the utmost importance to all Americans,” said Congresswoman Moore.

For the complete text of Rep. Moore’s statement today please [click here](#) .

Current co-sponsors of Congresswoman Moore’s legislation include the Chairman Bob Filner of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, Congressman Steve Kagen, Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, Congressman Bobby Rush, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, Congressman James McGovern, Congressman Raul Grijalia, Congressman Dennis Kucinich, Congressman Joe Sestak, Congressman Neil Abercrombie and Congressman Steve Cohen.

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